

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Positive Maturity, Inc. (PM), is a 501 (c )3 organization whose mission has been to enhance the lives of mature adults through civic engagement and social services since 1972. Positive Maturity, Inc. offers 6 programs designed to keep seniors in Jefferson, Shelby, Walker and Blount Counties actively engaged and independent for as long as possible. As a Corporation for National and Community Service sponsor, Positive Maturity, Inc. houses the 3 Senior Corps programs, RSVP, Senior Companion Program, Foster Grandparent Program and one VISTA program.

Positive Maturity is respectfully requesting \$127,638 from CNCS. In addition to the CNCS Funding, Positive Maturity, Inc. will secure supplemental funding in the amount of \$182,994 from United Way of Central Alabama, other local, county and state (non-federal) resources and through generous donations made by the community at large.

Through this generous funding, PM will be able to support an anticipated 2,100 RSVP volunteers over the next year. Our RSVP Volunteers will address community needs through "impact volunteering" with a primary focus area of Healthy Futures. Volunteers will also focus their efforts in addressing community needs in areas such as Disaster Services, Education, and Capacity Building for nonprofits. Throughout the next three years, Positive Maturity, Inc. and RSVP will also address Veterans and Military Families through volunteer recruitment and providing volunteers to address the needs of this very special community. RSVP anticipates achieving over 800,000 volunteer hours over the next three years with the hard work of RSVP Coordinators, the leadership of the RSVP Directors, and the support of the sponsoring agency. It will be our goal to achieve a success rate of 85% of all goals and objective set forth in this application.

## Strengthening Communities

Positive Maturity's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) serves four counties in central Alabama: Blount, Jefferson, Shelby and Walker. Jefferson County, Alabama includes Birmingham: the county seat and largest city in the state. In 2012 Jefferson county's population was estimated at 660,009 (54.7% Caucasian, 42.3% African American and 4% Hispanic). This urban setting is the largest of the four counties we serve. Adults age 55 and older make up 25.37% of the county's population. Jefferson County seniors rank 16th in the state for health factors such as physical activity and social support that leads to healthy outcomes. Shelby County is southeast of the Jefferson County Line, with a population of 200,941 (85% Caucasian , 11.4% African-American and 6% Hispanic). This mixture of

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urban and rural settings is considered to be the fastest growing and wealthiest community of Alabama. Adults age 55 and older make up 22.75% of the total population. While Shelby County seniors rank highest in the state for health factors leading to healthy outcomes, they continue to struggle with issues such as social isolation and community connectedness due to a large part of the county still being rural and the lack of public transportation. Blount County is northeast of the Jefferson County Line and has a population of 57,322. Adults age 55 and older make up 27% of their population (92.58% Caucasian, 1.33% African-American and 6.07% Hispanic). Blount County is considered a rural farming community. While farming keeps our older population physically active thus, ranking 13th in the state for health factors that lead to healthy outcomes, they have a higher rate of depression and social isolation due to the ruralness of the county. Walker County is west of the Jefferson County line, with a population of 67,023 (91.23% Caucasian, 5.8% African-American and 1.95% Hispanic) and median household income of \$35,150. Walker County is very rural and is considered one of the poorest counties in central Alabama. The senior population in Walker County (adults 55 and older) makes up 30.17% of their total population. Walker County seniors rank 57th in the state for health factors leading to healthy outcomes. This is primarily due to the lack of employment and health insurance which prevents them from accessing proper medical care. In addition, Walker County residents have a higher rate of blood pressure and diabetes. By providing volunteer opportunities to seniors of this county, we are connecting them with community resources and providing opportunities for them to become more active.

Each county is unique and requires an individualized approach when it comes to meeting the needs of their communities and senior populations. Education, poverty, access to healthy foods and nonprofits who are struggling with budgets are always priority listings for each county. There is, however, one common thread that ties all of these counties together: the need for Healthy Futures. According to [Americashealthranking.org](http://Americashealthranking.org), Alabama ranks 44th in the nation for seniors who report being active outside a regular job. Research continues to demonstrate that seniors who are active and connected socially live longer, healthier lives. The University of Boston conducted a study in 2010 looking at volunteerism among elderly and hypertension. Hypertension is one of the leading causes for heart disease, cognitive impairment, and renal failure. The study showed those who volunteer demonstrated lower diastolic and systolic readings than non-volunteers and were at lower risk for hypertension. This was due to an increase in activities that led to healthier lifestyles and a decrease in depression and social isolation. In a 2012 report released from the Corporation for National and

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Community Services entitled "Health Benefits of Volunteering for Older Americans", we learn that seniors who volunteer live longer and report less disability.

Significant increases in life expectancy, a growing elderly population, and advances in medical technology are setting the stage for long-term care challenges nationally and in Alabama. These challenges are especially acute for low income seniors. According to the 2010 census, there are 133,279 seniors (age 65 and older) living in Jefferson, Shelby, Walker and Blount counties. Approximately 18,659 of these seniors are living below the federal poverty line. In order to live independently, safely and longer, seniors will need help with daily living activities. Due to the economy, most family members must now work and have less time to spend taking care of a loved one who is not terminally ill or bedridden. Medicare and Medicaid waiver services often run out or do not cover seniors for smaller needs such as telephone reassurance or friendly visits. Seniors who remain in their home and are unable to attend social activities suffer from social isolation, which has a major impact on their overall health and well-being. Through telephone reassurance, friendly visits, and meals seniors who are trying to remain independent and in their homes can do so more successfully.

The RSVP program aims to meet these identified needs under the Priority Area of Healthy Futures in two primary ways: recruiting seniors to volunteer thereby increasing their social connectedness and activity and providing volunteers to meet the needs of isolated, home-bound seniors. In addition, Positive Maturity, Inc. and RSVP continues to reach out to the veterans community to assess the needs and opportunities for volunteers. Positive Maturity has recently entered into a partnership with the Veterans Hospital to provide volunteers for their "Spoons" program which allows volunteers to assist VA patients in the ordering, tray preparation and enjoyment of their meal while hospitalized. Through this partnership we are able to secure open communications on how Senior Corps Volunteers and the Veterans Administration can partner more to provide activities, opportunities and services together for healthier outcomes for the veterans.

Under the priority area of Healthy Futures, "Number of home-bound or older adults and individuals with disabilities who reported having increased social ties perceived social support", a minimum of 25% of unduplicated senior volunteers will serve in a variety of ways that will ensure that we are meeting the identified needs. Under this provision, volunteers will be recruited to provide daily meals

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through Meals on Wheels to home-bound seniors who are not able to leave their homes ensuring they are receiving a nutritious meal and friendly visit. Other seniors will provide a daily check in or friendly visit to seniors who are socially isolated due to lack of transportation, physical limitations or rural location of their home. RSVP volunteers will also assist families who are providing daily care for loved ones by providing short-term respite care.

Through sign-in sheets, volunteer time sheets, call logs and surveys, Positive Maturity's RSVP program will continuously track and monitor the progress of the volunteers and participants to ensure volunteers are meeting National Performance Measures outcomes and outputs as described in the work plan section of this grant. Information gathered will be entered into the Volunteer Reporter Data system for tracking and measuring success.

Seniors who are home-bound will be encouraged themselves to volunteer. They will be encouraged to be a warm line to another isolated senior or veteran of the military, or participate in craft projects that can be distributed to other seniors, children or members of the military like making crochet hats. Thus, decreasing their perception of social isolation and providing ways for them to connect with their community.

### **Recruitment and Development**

By assessing the strengths and needs of each county on an individual basis, RSVP is able to tailor programs and services to fit the citizens of all communities and allow them to stand on their own merit. It also provides the seniors of each community with more meaningful volunteer opportunities. In addition to working with volunteers, Coordinators will also work to build strong partnerships within their communities. This begins with advisory councils for each county made up of a diverse group of community volunteers, leaders and local nonprofit leaders. Each Advisory Council ensures that their county program is receiving input on program design, support and evaluation on current initiatives. Community partnerships are created out of identified needs and strategic priorities identified by CNCS. Coordinators seek out opportunities that fit within the work plans created in partnership with the RSVP director, but also respond to community outreach and identified need. They educate local officials, nonprofits and communities throughout their county about their RSVP efforts to provide capacity building through volunteerism, mobilizing community resources and matching volunteers to volunteer opportunities.

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Once a community partner has been identified, the coordinator will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the responsibilities of each organization. RSVP's role is to seek out volunteers and match them up with opportunities within their community. The Coordinators are there to support each volunteer and ensure the volunteers abilities, and skills are utilized to improve their communities and themselves through their experience. Partners who have signed up to be stations agree to provide structure, training, volunteer descriptions, supervision and support to ensure each experience is successful and beneficial to both the volunteer and agency. Station managers are also to verify each volunteer's time sheet, ensuring accountability and accurate reporting. Together the coordinator for RSVP, the volunteer and volunteer station can mobilize community resources, provide meaningful volunteer opportunities while continuing to enhance the organizations capacity. RSVP Coordinators also work with organizations to ensure that volunteers who may need accommodations due to age or disability have the tools needed to make their volunteer experience a positive one. All stations must complete an Alabama Disabilities Assessment form to ensure their building is accessible and that they are able to accommodate a special needs volunteer.

RSVP utilizes local newspapers articles, internet websites and word of mouth to educate the public about volunteer activities and how to become involved. Coordinators will speak at churches, senior organizations, centers and senior high rises to educate potential volunteers on community needs, volunteer opportunities and the benefits of volunteerism. Volunteers who sign up with RSVP are able to set the amount of time they volunteer, what activities they wish to engage in and where they want to volunteer. Once they have signed up to RSVP, the coordinator ensures that they are supported in their volunteer efforts by checking in with them, connecting them to community resources when needed and educating them on the impact they are making through their volunteer services. In addition, this year Positive Maturity, the sponsoring agency, has secured 3 VISTA volunteers who will work in conjunction with RSVP, the Aging Workers Are Reliable Employees, Positive Maturity and community at large to explore out of the box ideas that will enhance RSVP's ability to recruit those who are between the ages of 55-64. (See "Other" section)

RSVP coordinators pride themselves on providing their RSVP volunteers with high quality volunteer experiences that help build new skills, provide leadership opportunities and reflect on the impact our volunteers make within in their communities, all while enhancing the quality of their own lives. This starts by building a strong relationship with new and existing volunteers. Through close relationships,

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volunteers are encouraged to express their ideas and request training if needed. Building a strong corps of volunteers is on-going. Volunteers are recruited by referrals made by other volunteers and station managers, through presentations to community organizations such as Civitans, Hands On Birmingham, AARP, and senior centers. We also use local newspapers and Positive Maturity's website. Once a volunteer's goals have been identified, coordinators will match a volunteer with a station. Support services ensure we are able to maintain strong stations and retain volunteers. Coordinators assist the station with their supervision and communication to the volunteer and to serve as an advocate for their volunteers. By maintaining high visibility with the volunteers and stations, coordinators can spot potential problems before they impact the volunteer, the station or the service being provided. We encourage station managers to give feedback to the volunteer and to encourage and praise them. Coordinators supply volunteers and stations with satisfaction surveys. These surveys are conducted in the 1st quarter of the year to assess the volunteer work. RSVP's open door policy means volunteers, stations and communities are able to provide valuable feedback to ensure continuous development of the program. RSVP provides activities for their volunteers outside of volunteering, such as trips, recognition banquets, holiday luncheons and ceremonies where they are presented with service pens and plaques to recognize their accomplishments. In addition, RSVP coordinators seek opportunities for volunteers to be recognized in their communities. With any large RSVP activity, coordinators submit articles to local news media. By understanding the community needs and the volunteer's strengths and desire to volunteer we are able to create long-lasting and meaningful volunteer opportunities that impact our communities.

### **Program Management**

Prior to beginning a new program or opportunity, the RSVP Director will create work plans that reflect the areas of impact from CNCS. These work plans will have measurable goals and objectives and will serve as a template to assess project performance. These plans are utilized when talking to a potential partnering agency or station for our volunteers. While RSVP will entertain all projects presented as needs from the community, it aims to ensure 25% of all the unduplicated volunteer opportunities fall under the Priority Focus Areas. Coordinators also educate other nonprofits on how providing an opportunity for volunteers is a win-win situation by enhancing the capacity of organizations and institutions by freeing up time and money. Once a rapport has been established and needs have been identified, potential partners are provided with a memorandum of understanding, thus outlining the program regulations, the roles of RSVP, volunteer and community partner who will act as a station manager. Through this MOU process we are also able educate the stations on

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volunteer eligibility and help them identify and prevent prohibited activities for our volunteers. These partnerships allow RSVP to provide a seamless approach in services to reach more individuals through volunteerism. RSVP brings people together by impacting the lives of everyone in the community.

Once a community partner becomes a station, their information is entered into a data base along with the volunteers who choose the assignment. Time sheets are utilized by the stations to report the hours of volunteers and coordinators have constant contact ensuring that the volunteers are performing their assigned services activities. Through this constant contact, our coordinators are able to assess and reassess the changing community needs to ensure the volunteer opportunities are able to evolve with the station or if they have met the needs and are ready to graduate the program. These efforts are designed to minimize disruptions for our volunteers and ensure that we continue to impact our communities with the RSVP Volunteers.

Positive Maturity, Inc. (PM) has sponsored RSVP since 1972 in the four counties, Blount, Jefferson, Walker and Shelby. Positive Maturity's mission is to enhance the lives of seniors through civic engagement and social services. We have a proven track record of recruiting, placing and managing volunteers that meet the unique needs of each county, community and volunteer.

All volunteer information is placed in the Volunteer Reporter Database; hours turned in on time sheets are entered by the coordinator to accurately track the amount of time each volunteer spends on each focus area or community project. These hours are reported to the Director on a monthly basis. Also, RSVP distributes surveys to community partners/stations to solicit feedback on the program, the volunteers and the sponsoring agency. Along with the surveys, goals and objectives, the RSVP director works in conjunction with the Executive Director for an end of the year report that examines the use of project resources to ensure there is accountability. This information is shared with the Board of Directors of the sponsoring agency, local RSVP Advisory Councils and CNCS.

### **Organizational Capability**

Since 1972, Positive Maturity, Inc. has been a sponsor for the three Senior Corp Programs, RSVP, Senior Companion Program and Foster Grandparent Program. Our mission is to enhance the lives of seniors through civic engagement and social services. In addition to the three Senior Corps programs Positive Maturity also provides the community and senior adults with Geriatric Social Services to connect volunteers and the community with resources, the Aging Workers Are Reliable Employees

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(AWARE) program that assists older adults who are under employed or unemployed with resources to assist them in their quest to secure employment. AWARE also serves as a conduit for RSVP by educating participants on the advantages of volunteering while they are searching for a job. They understand the benefit of keeping a senior active and connected to their community. Finally, we offer seniors located in Jefferson County's East Lake area a senior center that serves as a nutrition site, Meals on Wheels distribution site and senior center. Each program is designed to support the other and work together to provide central Alabama's seniors with a holistic approach to remaining active and independent for as long as possible.

We attribute our success to a sound agency that provides an infrastructure that addresses programmatic and fiscal oversight and day to day operational support to Senior Corp Programs ensuring we are in compliance with statutes and regulations and accountable to our funding organizations and community. Our 21 member Board of Directors is made up of community leaders, community partners and volunteers that represent each county that we serve. They ensure that Positive Maturity is provided with a solid strategic plan that sets goals and objectives for the Executive Director and each program. The Board of Director's is responsible for setting policies and operating procedures that provide staff governance and addresses areas such as risk management, personnel management and fiduciary responsibility. The governance committee, in 2013, updated the agencies bylaws to ensure they met with today's standards and technology and are in the process of an annual review of the policies and procedures. Our finance committee recently completed a review of the finance policies and procedures, completed the 2013 investment policies and looked at the feasibility of planned giving. Due to the hard work of the Board of Directors, Positive Maturity has a six month reserve that will cover all programs in case of a financial emergency.

The Board of Directors meets on a bi-monthly basis to review the agency's progress, fiscal responsibility and address any concerns that may arise. Board committees, Finance, Governance, Personnel and Long-term Development meet on a regular basis to discuss the strengths and needs of the agency. These meetings are captured by minutes and shared with the board as a whole for review and/or approval. The Executive Director serves at the pleasure of the board of directors, and is responsible for providing reports that demonstrate accountability on a programmatic basis and to ensure that resources (both financial and in-kind) are used efficiently and effectively.

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Each program is also required to have an Advisory Council made up of community members and program participants. Each Advisory Council is designed to have a member of the Board of Directors assigned to ensure there is a direct line of communication between programs, advisory councils and the Board of Directors.

Positive Maturity employees are provided with job descriptions that outlines the expectations, salary and description of their duties. Employees are also provided with an employee handbook that outlines the rules and expectations of the agency, grievance procedures and organizational chart that clearly defines the chain of command and paid staff positions. Each Senior Corp Program is given an operations manual that is provided by the Corporation for National and Community Services to ensure that they remain in compliance with statues and regulations. Staff is provided ongoing training and learning opportunities both on a local level and those provided by CNCS.

Each year, Positive Maturity also completes a financial audit from an outside firm. This is to ensure that we have sound fiscal policies and are in compliance with statues, regulations and the OMB circulars. The audit as well as the 990 is then distributed to our board of directors for review and approval and posted to Guidestar for public inspection. We also provide a copy of our audit and 990 to funding agencies and any member of the community upon request.

### **Other**

VISTA support

Even though adults are retiring at a younger age, the volunteer rate for "Baby Boomers" continues to decline. A new study by Forbes Magazine (April 2013 issue) suggests that the Baby Boomer generation volunteers at a much lower rate than those from the "Silent Generation". The average age of Positive Maturity's RSVP volunteer is 72 and very reflective of this research. The article goes on to suggest that the reason for this decline is that the "Baby Boomers" population wants to use their expertise to provide meaningful assistance when they volunteer.

Positive Maturity's VISTA Volunteer program has been very instrumental in educating the business world over the past four years in Jefferson, Shelby and Blount Counties on the benefits of hiring an older workforce. They have educated others on the wisdom and knowledge held by those who have been in their field for many years and how it can benefit their company. By utilizing the same concept

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within the same communities (and adding Walker County) VISTA volunteers can now educate employers on the benefits of providing volunteers who are entering their retirement phase with volunteer opportunities that will keep them active and engaged in their communities for many years after they have gone. Employers will also understand how providing Skill-based volunteers to the community can re-energize an employee's creative thought process, skills and enhance their moral. This program can also educate companies on how they can strategically focus their social investment by making their most valuable assets, their talent, available to the community.

VISTA Volunteers can also enhance the volunteer's experience by researching out of the box ideas for volunteering. For example, a skill based volunteer who can assist a rural nonprofit with grant reviewing while at home through the internet; a retired consultant could provide phone support to an agency or face to face through Skype® thus cutting down on travel expenses and time.

By working with the Aging Workers Are Reliable Employees program and RSVP, VISTA volunteers can help establish programs that can cross over and be supported through a partnership between the volunteer and business world building capacity for many nonprofits and communities while ushering in a new generation of volunteers.

### **PNS Amendment (if applicable)**

NA